



COVID-19 and the Global Problem of Human Security

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Abstract

Human security is considered in the article as a global problem. Its importance was vividly highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic that broke out last year. Attention is drawn to the growing global complexity and the human lag in understanding it. It has led to the inclusion in the global agenda of the question on how to bridge this distance which began to be called “the human gap”. It is noted that the current paradigm, through which States strive to ensure their security, is not able to cope with the emerging threats to the existence of the contemporary civilization. It is suggested that the task of ensuring human security should be considered as an integral part of the global development agenda. It is proposed in this paper to direct the efforts of scientists to the scientific discussion of this problem.

The jubilee year 2020 left complicated memories and many questions for the future. It will be memorized as the year of the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory, of the establishment of the Yalta-Potsdam system of international relations, of the creation of the UN and UNESCO. With the anniversary background, it has highlighted the growing danger of global confrontation.

It was a year of gains and losses, of despair and hope in the fight against the coronavirus, crisis and conflict, when humanity, emerging from the captivity of false ideas, turned to the special value of human life and the revealed inability of States and international organizations to effectively protect it.

The growing complexity of the world and the lag of a human being in its understanding have formed and put on the agenda a problem that has become known as the “human gap”. It was originally described back in 1979 in a report to the Club of Rome “No Limits to Education. Overcoming the Human Gap”.^{*} The accelerating complexity of world processes, of living conditions, devices, means, methods and products used today makes us sometimes unable to understand their essence and the possible consequences.

The perception of ethical issues has become more acute, especially on issues of bioethics, ethics of science and artificial intelligence, in which real existential risks appeared more and more clearly against the background of artificially developed visibility of tolerance.

The four “horsemen of the Apocalypse” that are currently most threatening to humanity, as stated by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, are geopolitical tensions, climate

^{*} No Limits to Learning. Bridging the Human Gap. Report to the Club of Rome. Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1979. 159 p. ISBN 0-08-024705-9. <https://clubofrome.org/publications/no-limits-to-learning-1979/> Date of request 09.11.2020.

change, global distrust and the abuse of new technologies, who has clearly pointed out that the world is approaching the point of no return.

The first horseman, he noted, appears in the guise of very high and increasing geopolitical tension. Terror ruthlessly destroys ever new victims. The nuclear threat is growing. As a result of military conflicts and various oppressions, more people are forced to leave their homes and join the mass migration wagon than at any time since the Second World War. In the course of increasing global competition, fierce trade, economic and technological battles are unfolding in the struggle for markets and resources.

The second horseman is the planet's existential climate crisis, threatening millions of species with extinction.

The third horseman is a catastrophic decline in the level of trust in a society suffering from social inequality, discrimination, double standards and disillusionment with political institutions and the values they proclaim.

The fourth global threat is the reverse side of the new digital world in which technological progress is faster than the ability of a human being to meet it or even to realize it.*

Permanently developing and improving technologies change the quality of human life, bringing huge benefits, but with them a huge harm and danger. Civilization processes are being reprogrammed and reshaped on digital platforms in the interests of the few against the interests of the majority. Human consciousness is subjected to manipulative influences and is gradually transformed under the impact of purposefully constructed information flows with a wide use of fiction and historical falsifications.

There is a growing alienation, frustration, dehumanization and desocialization of people. The moral and ethical principles, on which the construction of human society is based, are going to be destroyed, and instead alternatives are offered that contradict the very nature of a human being and his life destination.

Unknown digital crimes and opportunities are emerging and being used for inciting discord and hatred—"new slavery", discrimination and exploitation of people, for mass and permanent invasion of their privacy.

A little later, adding to the biblical image, the UN Secretary-General called the worldwide coronavirus pandemic the "fifth horseman of the Apocalypse", which joined the other four and increased the destructive power of each of them. He stressed that humanity is facing an epochal health crisis and the largest economic setback since the Great Depression. Countries are experiencing major upheaval, and the already fragile foundation on which the world stands is being shaken under stress and in need of global leadership.†

Along with global security issues, the attention of the world community is now increasingly focused on the problem of ensuring the security of each human being, of each individual. The States clearly did not cope with this problem. The COVID-19 virus,

* Guterres A. Remarks to the General Assembly on the Secretary General's priorities for 2020. The official website of the United Nations. 22.01.2020 [Electronic resource] URL: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2020-01-22/remarks-general-assembly-priorities-for-2020>. Date of request 18.04.2020.

† TVC 22.09.2020: The UN Secretary General warned about the coming Apocalypse due to the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.tvc.ru/news/show/id/193101/>. Date of request 30.09.2020

instantly spreading around the world, has made us think that humanity can be destroyed no less realistically by biological means than by nuclear weapons. The ring of global risks of the contemporary world, which includes geopolitical, economic, social, technological and environmental threats, is increasingly compressed around every human being. The forecast of the World Economic Forum that in 2020 the protest of the civil society against deepening social inequality would increase, the instability of the geopolitical environment would worsen and the number of cyber attacks would increase* has been fully confirmed.

“The first duty of the state is to serve and protect its citizens. It cannot be adequately met today by an emphasis on military power alone. It is necessary to counter the threats of environmental degradation, as well as to ensure the personal health and well-being of people.”

According to the President of the Global Security Institute, Jonathan Granoff, “the current paradigm, through which the most influential countries seek to ensure security, is not able to cope with many dynamic threats to the survival of our civilization”. † The first duty of the state is to serve and protect its citizens. It cannot be adequately met today by an emphasis on military power alone. It is necessary to counter the threats of environmental degradation, as well as to ensure the personal health and well-being of people. In fact, a military-based approach to security exacerbates adverse conditions, rather than encourage the cooperation needed to ensure sustainable life and development. It is more appropriate to use a scientific approach based on the understanding of the need to live in harmony with the natural world, respect and protect its regenerative processes, as well as the implementation of policies and practices in accordance with the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to guarantee human dignity.‡

Realistic solutions require an awareness of the current undeniable existential global threats to humanity posed by climate change, pandemic diseases, weapons of mass destruction, as well as the daily impact on people by hunger, poverty, unemployment, crime, social scarcity and inequality, political oppression and injustice. Economic and intellectual efforts invested in ensuring the security of the State protecting its territory from aggression and promoting national interests by military means do not solve the many problems of human security, which give rise to the diversity of the causes and conditions of the existing dangerous global instability. What is needed is a comprehensive approach that refocuses on energy, resources, and success rates of the human being, on the natural and social environment in which the human beings exist.

Human security must be ensured not only in the context of the global problem of violence, but also in terms of its social, moral and spiritual security. It should be considered as an

* The Global Risks Report 2020, 15th Edition//World Economic Forum. Geneva, 2020. P. 4-5.

† Granoff, Jonathan. President, Global Security Institute. Approaching Human Security. CADMUS, Scientific Journal of the World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS). Volume 4, No.3, November 2020, 1-4. P. 1.

‡ Ibid. P. 2.

integral part of the global agenda set out in the UN General Assembly resolution A/res/70/1 of 25 September 2015, “The 2030 agenda for sustainable development”.^{*} Human security is implicit in all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In fact, it permeates the fabric of 169 targets that should ensure these goals, but still in the vast majority of cases it is not a real security policy of States. The recent establishment of the post of a Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for relations with international organizations for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals demonstrates Russia’s increased attention to this issue.[†]

“A holistic and comprehensive approach to human security opens the way to a sustainable and prosperous future.”

The emerging modern concept of ensuring human security requires an understanding that the well-known ancient Roman maxim about achieving peace by preparing for war is too dangerous today. It has been repeatedly confirmed in the history of human civilization that preparation for war is capable of generating it. “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed”—says the Preamble to the UNESCO Constitution.[‡]

The obsessive desire for global domination that its contenders were never able to accomplish in human history creates unfavorable conditions for achieving human security. The principles of cooperation based on mutual consideration of interests and the rule of law, on reaching agreements and resolving conflict situations through diplomacy and negotiations are being marginalized and replaced by a “position of strength” approach.

Comprehensive human security may seem like a distant ideal, but the ideal, as we know, is capable of gaining ground, generating the necessary changes in favor of its achievement. Working together to ensure human security cannot only strengthen cooperation between States, but also provide a much higher degree of security within countries, eliminating dangerous threats and freeing up economic, organizational and intellectual resources to meet human needs. The desire to ensure human security promotes the forming of a global culture of peace, understanding the value of human life and the need to move to a higher stage of human development, which the Great Russian scientist Vladimir Vernadsky saw in the future noospheric civilization based on the power of reason.

It is existentially important, however, to achieve not in the distant future, but as quickly as possible the effective neutralization of vital risks that threaten any human being literally at every moment of his existence. Making lower the level of external and internal threats will reduce costs by abstaining from non-productive expensive technologies and resources. The volume and accessibility of public goods will increase, which, in turn, will lead to the

^{*} United Nations General Assembly 21 October 2015 Resolution Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development A/RES/70/1 A/RES/70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (un.org) https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf Date of request 02.12.2020

[†] RIA Novosti. 5.12.2020. President of Russia Vladimir Putin has appointed a special representative of the President for relations with international organizations to achieve the sustainable development goals. <https://ria.ru/20201205/chubays-158771571.html> Date of request 02.12.2020

[‡] UNESCO in brief: mission and mandate. <https://ru.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco> Date of request 02.12.2020

development of human social security and the possibility of constructive solutions to global problems.

A holistic and comprehensive approach to human security opens the way to a sustainable and prosperous future. It allows the use of values, skills, aspirations, best practices and experiences of different people, nations and cultures. The challenges posed by pandemic diseases, climate change, weapons of mass destruction and the threats by the development of new technologies and artificial intelligence are rapidly expanding. Their analysis and impact assessment are amenable to verifiable empirical methods that use scientific tools and require global cooperation. A fundamental shift in the understanding of their theoretical and practical content is needed to make the necessary changes in policy, and these changes must be systemic and holistic. It seems that to disconnect the regenerative processes of the natural world from the economic system is simply unrealistic, to continue focusing security tasks on the State rather than on people is increasingly unjustified, and to fragment approaches to human security and sustainable development is clearly counterproductive.

Human security should be understood as a multi-faceted, multi-level right of all people, extending to all aspects of human activity. Human security should be perceived as an integrated system that includes personal health, air, water, food, living conditions, rights and obligations, interaction with the outside world and protection from possible aggression and illegal actions. Human security should be an integral principle and the highest public priority without borders and national exceptions on political, religious or other grounds. The borders and national sovereignty of States that form the geopolitical landscape of the Planet cannot serve as an effective obstacle for cross-border threats, as the coronavirus pandemic has confirmed. The stability, the sovereignty and legitimacy of States are approved today not only by human drawn borders and written laws, but also by how in the given state the security of their citizens is ensured.

The problem of ensuring human security is complicated by the global problem of inequality, which takes on catastrophic dimensions, threatening a social explosion at points of extreme tension. As the UN SG stated, today 26 people own half of the Earth's wealth,* while more than 70% of its population is experiencing insufficiency or lack of necessary income.† Social instability is growing dangerously as a result of increasing income and opportunity inequality and the widening gap between the poor and the rich. Social inequality generates, and will continue to generate new conflicts and threats to human security until a mitigation and subsequent comprehensive solution to this problem is achieved, in the context of the global development agenda, which, however, seems to be a very distant prospect.

Global threats to the physical destruction of people and the entire civilization are not only not eliminated, they are becoming ever more dangerous against the background of irresponsible reflections of individual politicians and the military about the possibility of a "limited nuclear war". It is necessary to reduce and then eliminate the threat of a global catastrophe, which would most likely end the history of humankind. It could be done by the joint efforts of States at the global level, but the "collective West" so far has not shown its readiness to cooperate in this vital issue for all.

* TASS, 18 July 2020 <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/8999053> Date of request 17.11.2020

† Lenta RU 18 July 2020 <https://lenta.ru/news/2020/07/18/bogatstvo/> Date of request 17.11.2020

The forming of a multipolar world is taking place in conditions that have become seriously and dangerously complicated over the past year. Along with the coronavirus pandemic, the Planet has been engulfed in a frenzy of trade wars and economic sanctions unleashed by the United States and its allies, which threatens global sustainable development. Concerns about global catastrophic risks have increased markedly. This is evidenced by a representative public opinion poll conducted by the international sociological service “Novus” on the order of the Global Challenges Foundation at the end of 2020* in 10 countries of the world.† In the published report on the results of the study, global catastrophic risks are proposed to be understood as events or threats that can cause serious damage to humanity around the world, whether immediately or in the future, with a potential impact on 10% of the world’s population or more.‡ A majority of 10,154 respondents in the 10 countries§ surveyed believe that the world is even less secure today than it was two years ago. South Africa (73%), Australia (69%), Russia (68%) and Brazil (67%) account for the largest share of those who believe that the world has become less secure. Describing the current state of the world in one word, all participants, with rare exceptions, did not use positive epithets, applying such characteristics as “terrible”, “scary”, “frightening”, “chaotic”. In the first place, 7 countries, including Russia, came out with the definition of “pandemic”. The majority of the population in all countries surveyed view climate change, environmental degradation, political violence, weapons of mass destruction, pandemics, artificial intelligence, population growth, and extreme poverty as potential global catastrophic risks. The study indicates an increased general concern about the issue of human security and worry that States are often unable to cope with it.¶

Meanwhile, in the mass consciousness assertions that in a rapidly changing world the situation is developing in such a way that globalization will soon leave no place for nation-states in it, replacing their role by transnational corporations “with social responsibility,” are being increasingly implanted. This, in particular, is discussed in the book “COVID-19: the Great Reset”, which the founder and permanent moderator of the Davos Forum, Klaus Schwab, wrote in the summer of 2020 in collaboration with journalist Thierry Malleret. Assessing the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, the authors say that humanity will never be able to return to the life that existed before. They believe that a “new reality” is being formed in the world, radically different from the previous one.** Some speak about the “new normal”, expressing their belief that the virus has been, in general, very useful, providing the opportunity for a quick reset.

The vision of the future, which leaves States, their Governments and peoples in the past, offering instead a “new reality” under the auspices of “socially responsible” transnational corporations, does not specify how in this case and by whom the functions of the State will be performed to ensure law and order, human rights and human security. In any case, the activities of transnational corporations and their priority focus on their own interests

* Global Challenges Foundation. Global Catastrophic Risks and International Collaboration. Opinion poll 2020. Report. Date of request 18.11.2020

† Australia, Brazil, China, Russia, South African Republic, Sweden, USA, Germany, India, United Kingdom.

‡ Global Challenges Foundation. Global Catastrophic Risks and International Collaboration. Opinion poll 2020. Report. P. 6 The public’s perception of global catastrophic risks Date of request 18.11.2020

§ Ibid.

¶ Ibid.

** Klaus Schwab. Thierry Malleret. COVID-19: The Great Reset. Forum Publishers. 2020.

and profit-making provoke serious doubts about their ability and readiness to be “socially responsible” enough to take on the social functions of the State.

Not only such theoretical reflections on the changes taking place in the world, but also the practical manifestations of such changes cause in some cases deep concern in the world community. The 2020 US presidential election was held against the backdrop of unprecedented attacks on human rights and security, resulting in mass humiliation of human dignity. The proclaimed principles of equality, freedom and democracy, which are nominally the values of American society, were literally turned upside down in the apotheosis of destruction that engulfed the country, which in many ways called into question human security.

In the European Union today, similar processes that destroy the foundations of civilization could be observed. Ideas of transhumanism, false tolerance and transformations on this basis, ranging from the transformation of the world and society to changes in human physiology, imposed by an aggressive minority, provoke conflicts in which violence often makes the value of human life and its security insignificant concepts.

Today, scientists and research centers, including such well-known “thought laboratories” as the World Academy of Art and Science and the Club of Rome, are thinking hard about the problem of human security. St. Petersburg scientist I. F. Kefeli proposed a new concept of “asfatronics” to denote the emerging theory of a comprehensive vision of global security problems.* At the initiative of the World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS), an international project was launched under the auspices of the UN Office in Geneva, called “Global Leadership in the 21st Century” (GL-21). The discussions and events held during the anniversary year within the framework of the GL-21 project, as well as the online session on December 15-16, 2020, testified to the high relevance of this topic and the interest that the search for ways to implement it arouses in the world. The Academy, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, was founded by great scientists such as Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Robert Oppenheimer and other global thinkers and was initially formed as a movement against the use of scientific research results for purposes that could harm humanity. Then it went to the counteraction to destructive trends in the field of culture and art. In recent years, the Academy has participated in the international scientific congress on “Globalistics”, which was held at the Lomonosov Moscow State University on the initiative of the Faculty of Global Processes.

On May 20, 2020 the International scientific forum on “Global social transformations and civilization prospects” was held on the online platform of the Faculty of Global Processes of the Lomonosov Moscow State University with the participation of UNESCO, World Academy of Art & Science and the Club of Rome which raised the issue of human security, made especially important against the background of the corona virus pandemic outbreak. This topic was on the agenda as “COVID-19 and Human Security” of our next joint international scientific online forum with UNESCO, the Academy and the Club on December 22, 2020 initiated by the Faculty of Global Processes and the UNESCO Chair on Global Problems of the Lomonosov Moscow State University. The opening report of Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences A. G. Chuchalin prompted the session participants to discuss the relationship between the uncertainty of coronavirus infection and the global situation generated by a new virus of an unclear origin.

* Kefeli I. Asfatronics. On the way to the global security theory. St. Petersburg, 2020.

The scientists of the Lomonosov Moscow State University decided to rethink in relation to the realities of today's world, which has changed radically over the past, the famous report of the Club of Rome "Limits to Growth", which became a world sensation almost half a century ago. A scientific team under the leadership of MSU Rector Academician V. A. Sadovnichy started to develop a scientific paper titled "New limits to growth", designed to assess the state of the world and perspectives of its development. The issue of human security will be given high priority in the report.

Summing up the outcomes of the year 2020, it could be seen that COVID-19 as a new global threat turned out to be a real global transformation making the world different than the way it was before. It provoked a deep global economic and social crisis comparable with the Great Depression, if not exceeding it. This global crisis was not only to a great extent unexpected, but also unusual, because it was generated primarily not by economic reasons. Its origin took root in medical and social circumstances. The crisis rapidly acquired a clear civilizational character. It has led to radical changes in the genotype of civilization and to the transitions to a new historical era in the world's civilizational dynamics. It has caused pending changes in social and economic relations and in geopolitical configurations.

The question posed was, 'Was this crisis unavoidable and what can we expect?' Opinions were expressed that the present crisis should not be considered as a negative event only. It appears that the crisis along with all its negative implications might also have positive features playing a progressive role according to Joseph Schumpeter's "creative destruction" of old, outdated elements of social and economic systems and mechanisms, opening space for innovative development.

Characteristic of every crisis, the present one has its specific features. It is a kind of a hybrid crisis combining crisis in demography, crisis in economy, as well as social and political crises. They mutually deepen and amend each other. Another specific feature is the human factor. Without indulging in the discussion if it is a human-made virus or not, it could be stated that in the origin of the crisis there is a human failure to master the threat, teaching all of us important lessons about the inadmissibility of approaches that there can be a "little" or limited use of nuclear, bacteriological, chemical or any other means of mass annihilation. The world has proved to be too fragile for it.

The crisis was caused by a pandemic factor for the first time since the 13th century when about half of the population of Europe was killed by the plague.

The crisis will inevitably lead to changes in the character and correlation of global social transformations. It will obviously raise the social role of the State and the public attention to medical care. It will decrease the mobility of the population and slow down internal and external migration processes. It will digitalize the society and change the way of life.

The crisis is a serious global challenge and problem. The task of scientists is to elaborate approaches on how to master it.

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